

Building auDA 2.0

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2023

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1. Introduction and Mission

.au Domain Administration Ltd (auDA) is Australia's Country Code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) administrator which oversees the operation and management framework of the .au domain of the internet. auDA is a not-for-profit public company endorsed by the Australian Government tasked to provide a safe, secure and operational namespace for all Australian internet users.

On 19 October 2017, the Minister for Communications, Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, announced a review of Australia's management of the .au domain (the Review). The central finding of the Review was that current management and governance framework for auDA is no longer fit-for-purpose and that reform is necessary if the company is to perform effectively and meet the needs of Australia's internet users.

The digital landscape has changed significantly since auDA was endorsed by the Australian Government in 2000. The internet has become all-pervasive and a critical enabler of the digital economy. The .au namespace plays an important role in supporting the digital economy, allowing entities and organisations to register domain names. As of late August 2018, over 3.1 million .au domain names had been registered in Australia.

While internet usage continues to grow, the overall communications environment is changing. Australians are accessing the internet in different ways and cyber security threats are increasingly prevalent. Future trends may have an impact on the domain space and it is important Australia has an effective, competitive and competent .au administrator that is able to ensure the ongoing availability of .au domain at the same time planning for future technical and competitive challenges.

This strategy outlines the process auDA will adopt to succeed in this changing environment.

auDA's Mission Statement

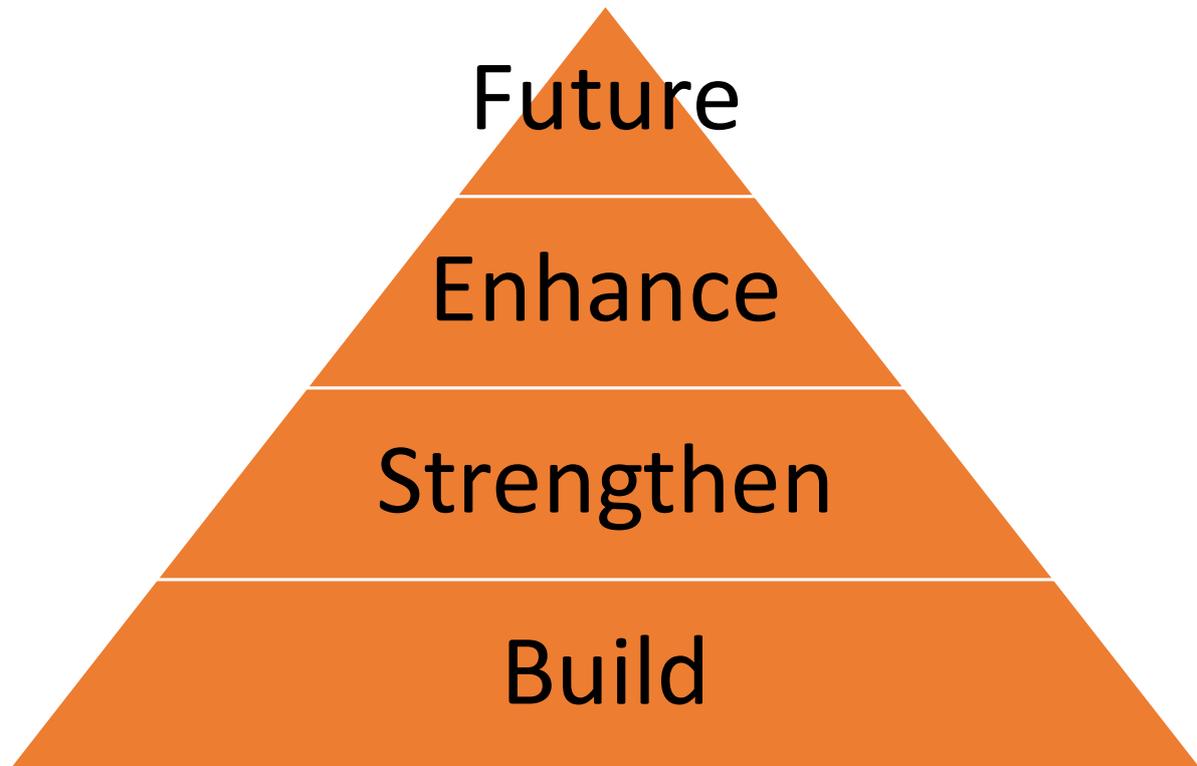
auDA's core mission is to administer the .au country code top level domain (ccTLD) name space for the benefit of the more than 20 million Australian Internet users.

2. Vision

Over the next 5 years, auDA plans to:

- Become a top 10 country code top level domain (ccTLD) in terms of volumes of registrations through improving the utility of .au to better support micro-businesses (1 to 4 people) and individuals, and support new Internet applications such as Internet of Things (IoT)
- Become the best ccTLD globally in terms of minimising domain name abuse through improved eligibility checking of registrants, and pro-active compliance activities
- Become the best ccTLD globally in terms of improving the security and stability of the name space through implementing international IT security standards
- Provide support services for top level domains (TLDs) in the Asia-Pacific region to assist them to operate TLDs with best practice across policy, compliance, and security to better protect Australian Internet users that access Internet resources using these ccTLDs
- To promote the benefits of the domain name system and the utility of the .au namespace to a wider audience of digital users and strengthen the appeal of domains names against ever-increasing competition from open-sourced platforms, social media, mobility and devices

3. Strategic Framework



auDA strategic framework consists of 4 layers, with each layer building on the layers below:

- Build – build the capabilities of the organisation to deliver
- Strengthen – strengthen the stability and security of .au
- Enhance – enhance future value of the .au ccTLD
- Future – next generation of users and value for the .au ccTLD

3.1 Build

auDA plans to build its capabilities to deliver in the following areas:

- Technical capability
 - a focus on building IT security capabilities amongst the staff with a specialisation in DNS services
 - build service management capabilities to international standard levels – ISO 27001, ISO 22301, and ISO 20000.
- Compliance capability
 - Focus on building predictable and scalable compliance processes
 - Shifting from predominately reactive processes in response to complaints to proactive processes based on data analysis
 - Development of software tools to assist in daily review of registry activity and regular audits of registrant eligibility
- Policy development capability
 - Develop tools to help prepare working groups with the key facts, Australian legal principles, and relevant Australian best practice, and relevant international best practice associated with a particular policy area.
 - Develop tools to help explore alternative solutions to a particular problem
 - Develop tools to help analyse stakeholder feedback
- Stakeholder engagement capability
 - Develop tools to assist in identifying stakeholders that want to be involved in policy development, versus stakeholders that want to be informed and educated about how to implement and comply with new policies.
 - Develop tools to allow more scalable and structured input on new policies from a greater portion of the 20m Australian Internet users
 - Compliment and be informed by auDA's separate Stakeholder Engagement strategy
- Registry and registrar contract management
 - Develop skills in pro-actively reviewing contractual compliance, rather than relying on complaints from registrars or registrants.
 - Develop skills in iteratively improving the contracts to take into account new industry developments.
 - Build training materials to assist registrars in properly implementing .au policies
 - Develop a best-practice framework to assist ccTLDs in developing and emerging nations to focus on competitive and value-for-money back-end registry operations, effective compliance and corporate governance structures and appropriate policy implementation and management

3.2 Strengthen

auDA plans to strengthen the stability and security of .au through:

- New registry contract

- Requirements to meet international standards for security, staff screening, disaster recovery and business continuity
- Requirements to meet Australian best practice security standards – such as the Australian Signal Directorate’s Essential Eight
- Proactive measurement of service levels
 - Use an array of 20 measurement servers spread globally to measure the availability and performance of all key systems including the registry, WHOIS service and DNS services
 - The new registry operator now has DNS nameservers located in all the capital cities of Australian states and territories, and is able to capture data on DNS usage at each location
- Business continuity planning
 - Ensure auDA and the registry operator develops a business continuity plan to ISO 22301 standard, and conduct annual business continuity exercises where auDA is required to temporarily resume the registry service
 - Achieve ISO22301 certification
- Staff screening
 - Ensure that all auDA staff that have access to sensitive information are screened at AS-4811 standard, and national identify proofing guidelines level 3
- Information Security standard
 - Create security management processes that are ISO27001 compliant and are consistent with PROTECTED level as set out in the Australian Government’s Information Security Manual
 - Achieve ISO27001 certification
- Penetration testing
 - Undertake annual automated penetration tests of all critical systems, and correct any vulnerabilities found
 - Undertake regular “red team” penetration tests of the registry and auDA’s systems, to further improve security culture.
- Engage with Australian Government security services
 - As set out in the Enterprise Security Strategy and the Stakeholder Engagement strategy – liaise with the Australian Government security agencies to seek advice and share information on security exploits that rely on the features of the DNS System.
- Form a Technical Advisory Standing Committee
 - Comprising a combination of auDA Associate Members, stakeholders and other interested parties to meet at least quarterly to consider new developments in cyber security that may impact on the .au eco-system

- Review security standards and practices relevant to registrars
 - Take into account international security standards, and Australian security standards, and determine what practices should be mandatory for registrars.
 - Provide education and training on best practices

- Review security standards and practices relevant to resellers
 - Resellers use a mixture of services provided by registrars, as well as use separate software solutions such as Web Host Manager Complete Solution (WHMCS) and Berkeley Internet Name Domain (BIND). In addition resellers rely on some services provided by the registry, such as WHOIS and the domain name password retrieval tool.
 - Provide education and training on best practices for managing security of domain name processes, and the appropriate configuration of available IT solutions.

3.3 Enhance

auDA plans to enhance the future value of the .au ccTLD through:

- Identify market opportunities for growth
 - There is a high penetration of .au names into businesses with more than 20 employees, but a much lower penetration into businesses with less than 5 employees (micro-businesses) and individuals. Start-ups and individuals tend to use either .com domain names or use social media pages (e.g. Facebook or Twitter accounts), due to their lower barriers of entry.
 - .au also has lower levels of penetration into the non-for-profit sector and amongst the Indigenous people of Australia.
 - Some parts of the Australian community prefer to use different language scripts such as Chinese, Vietnamese or Arabic characters – which are common in business names and on shop fronts in major Australian cities. Domain name registries can also support different language scripts.
 - auDA will identify the barriers of entry or lack of information available to some segments of community and seek to address through policy change, and targeted education campaigns.

- Build the value proposition of .au around stability, security and trust
 - .au has one of the highest reputations in the world for the quality of its policy framework and its compliance capability – leading to some of the best ratings in the world from organisations such as Spamhaus and McAfee, with respect to the level of DNS abuse present. However there is little understanding of this amongst Australian Internet users beyond that .au is for Australians, when compared with other TLDs.
 - auDA will look to improve education materials to better inform the public on the .au policy framework and what users can expect with respect to a .au domain name.

- Build data analytics capability

- With the new registry contract, auDA now has direct access to both historical and current domain name registration information, as well as access to logs for services such as the domain registration platform, the WHOIS platform, and the DNS nameservers.
- auDA will build IT system capabilities to allow more sophisticated searches across data in the .au namespace.
- Insights from data analytics will help inform policy development, and the identification of new market opportunities.
- Further policy development
 - A key part of enhancing the value of the .au namespace, is the development of policies that make it easier for under-served segments of the Australian community to register a .au domain name. The policy work on direct registration in .au is an example of such work to make it easier for start-ups and individuals to get .au domain names.
 - auDA will also ensure that the policy rules relating to 2LDs are clear and can be proactively managed through compliance. The outcome of a review of the eligibility to hold a domain name by the compliance team should be predictable and repeatable – to ensure that the processes can scale, and ensure that Australian users can trust in using a .au domain name.

3.4 Future

In addition, to actively working to improve the value of the .au domain name space for the current mainstream applications of website and email services, auDA will also actively investigate new opportunities to provide benefits to the more than 20 million Australian Internet users. auDA will evaluate and pursue the following priorities over the next 5 years to achieve this objective:

- Trust markers
 - auDA could provide further levels of validation and authentication of registrants – for example auDA could provide a service similar to that of automobile associations that carry out tests on a car, before the car is offered for sale. auDA could validate that a registrant has the necessary rights to sell a domain name. A trust mark could be used to inform the public that a name has been appropriately validated prior to sale.
 - auDA could also build relationships with digital certificate authorities to be able to issue a digital certificate with a domain name that signifies that the registrant has passed additional validation checks- similar to that used by extended validation processes for digital certificates.
- Bundled registration services
 - Much of the information used to register a domain name is similar to the information that may be required to register a company, a business name, or a trademark, or to obtain an Australian Business Number. Through tighter integration to other Government agencies, auDA may be able to offer bundled products through to the registrar channel.
- Naming systems for Internet of Things

- The growth of Internet connected devices (Internet of Things) may give rise to the need for appropriate naming systems within .au to signify that the device is associated with a company or individual with a nexus to Australia.
- A naming system could be identified as an additional second level domain within .au, and the names may consist of product codes – e.g. with a set of characters to identify the product vendor followed by a unique item number. E.g bom1234.iot.au – might identify a particular temperature sensor managed by the Bureau of Meteorology.
- Services for TLDs located in the region
 - Service providers target Australian Internet users using a range of different top level domains (TLDs) – some of these may be operated within the Australian territory – like .melbourne, and others may be operated outside of Australia like .cc.
 - auDA may offer its policy development, compliance, contract and tender management, and DNS management services to other TLDs as a managed service to help improve their services and better protect Australian Internet users from scams etc. using these TLDs.
 - As a starting point auDA will work with the new registry operator to provide services such as back-up DNS services, and business continuity services

4. Operating plan and deliverables

auDA will develop an annual operating plan and budget with clear deliverables that are consistent with the strategic framework set out in the section above. This operating plan will align with the financial boundaries of 1 July to 30 June.

auDA has separately set out its deliverables for the 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 financial year, in the Enterprise Security Strategy and in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

auDA has also provided a set of deliverables as part of its implementation plan dated May 2018, provided to the Australian Government to address the requirements for the new Terms of Endorsement. A key component of this is a new constitution that will be voted on by members in September 2018.